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International Convention
on the Elimination
of all Forms of
Racial Discrimination

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION
OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION

Twelfth periodic reports of States parties due in 1992

Addendum

HOLY SEE*

[25 January 1993]

1. In submitting the eleventh and twelfth reports in a single document, as requested by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (note G/SO 237/2 (2) of 27 October 1992), the Holy See wishes to remind the members of the Committee of its exceptional nature within the community of nations: as a sovereign subject in international law, it has a mission of an essentially religious and moral order, universal in scope, which is based on minimal territorial dimensions guaranteeing a basis of autonomy for the pastoral ministry of the Sovereign Pontiff.

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* This document contains the eleventh and twelfth periodic reports which were due on 1 June 1990 and 1 June 1992 respectively. For the ninth and tenth periodic reports submitted by the Holy See and the summary records of meetings of the committee at which those reports were considered, see the following documents:

Ninth periodic report - CERD/C/149/Add.6 (CERD/C/SR.793);

Tenth periodic report - CERD/C/172/Add.8 (CERD/C/SR.875).

The documents mentioned in the text of the report may be consulted by members of the committee in the secretariat's files.

2. By virtue of the authority of the Roman Pontiff over the Catholic Church, the Holy See has a specific way of responding to the obligations established by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, through teaching which inspires the conduct of Catholics all over the world and of all those who recognize its value. This teaching, based on the Evangel of Jesus Christ and on the tradition of the Apostles, postulates the equal dignity of every individual and of every human group, without distinction as to race.

3. This report accordingly contains the principal texts (in chronological order) through which Pope John Paul II has denounced any form of racial discrimination during the period in question. These texts, the list of which is far from exhaustive, clearly and vigorously take up the most important aspects of the problem of racism as it exists in the modern world.

4. In particular, they contain condemnations of racial prejudice, racial discrimination and xenophobia (texts Nos. 4, 7 and 9), apartheid (texts Nos. 1, 2, 6 and 15), anti-Semitism (texts Nos. 3, 5, 10 and 12), discrimination against gypsies (text No. 8), hostility towards immigrants and refugees (texts Nos. 11 and 14), and violation of the rights of indigenous peoples (text No. 13). The action of the Holy See in combating the scourge of racism, therefore, mainly takes the form of the education of consciences, for it is in man's heart that hatred towards his own brother - which lies at the origin of the sin of racism - takes root.

5. To this work of education, which is universal in its influence, corresponds, within the internal structure of the Church, legislation based on the most stringent racial equality. Article 208 of the Code of Canon Law (1983), for example, states: "Among all the faithful, as a result of their regeneration in Christ, there exists as to dignity and activity a genuine equality in accordance with which all cooperate in the building of the Body of Christ, in accordance with the condition and function peculiar to each."

6. The Holy See's commitment in this area is also evident from the activity of its Dicasteries. By way of example, the document The Church confronted with racism - For a more brotherly society (text No. 16), published in November 1988 by the Pontifical Council Iustitia et Pax, briefly outlines racist behaviour throughout history, contemporary forms of racism, the bases of Christian teaching on the dignity of every race and on the unity of mankind, and the contribution of Christians to the promotion, with others, of brotherhood among races. This document was presented, inter alia, at a seminar held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 21 September 1989 by His Eminence Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, President of the Pontifical Council Iustitia et Pax.

7. The Holy See's action to combat racial discrimination also takes other forms. Its representatives speak in the various international governmental organizations. Mention may be made, for example, of the statement (text No. 12) made by His Eminence Mgr. Renato Martino, Permanent Observer to the United Nations, during the work of the Special Political Committee on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). As the Permanent Observer stated, the principle of the

equal dignity of all peoples gives rise to the right of the peoples of Israel and Palestine to have their own homeland. In addition, numerous articles are published on this question by L'Osservatore Romano (daily newspaper in Italian, with weekly editions in English, French, German, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish).

8. At the end of this brief summary of the various activities of the Holy See, reference should also be made to the efforts which individual churches are making at the local level, wherever they exist. These include pastoral letters, statements or study notes, published jointly by episcopal conferences or individually by bishops. They represent the specific, local application of the doctrinal principles which guide the action of the universal Catholic Church in this area and which are reflected in a large number of practical initiatives in dioceses, parishes and education or assistance institutes under ecclesiastical authority.

9. The Holy See willingly takes this opportunity to express its renewed support for United Nations action to promote respect for the dignity of every human being, without any distinction as to race, colour, national or ethnic origin, language, religion, sex or any other social or cultural status.

10. The Catholic Church considers any discrimination motivated by race as radically opposed to its teaching since, before God, all persons and all peoples have the same dignity and the same importance, because of their common origin and common destiny.